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READERS

THE SANDMAN™

brief lives

written by

NEIL GAIMAN

illustrated by

JILL THOMPSON

and

VINCE LOCKE

JOURNEY'S END

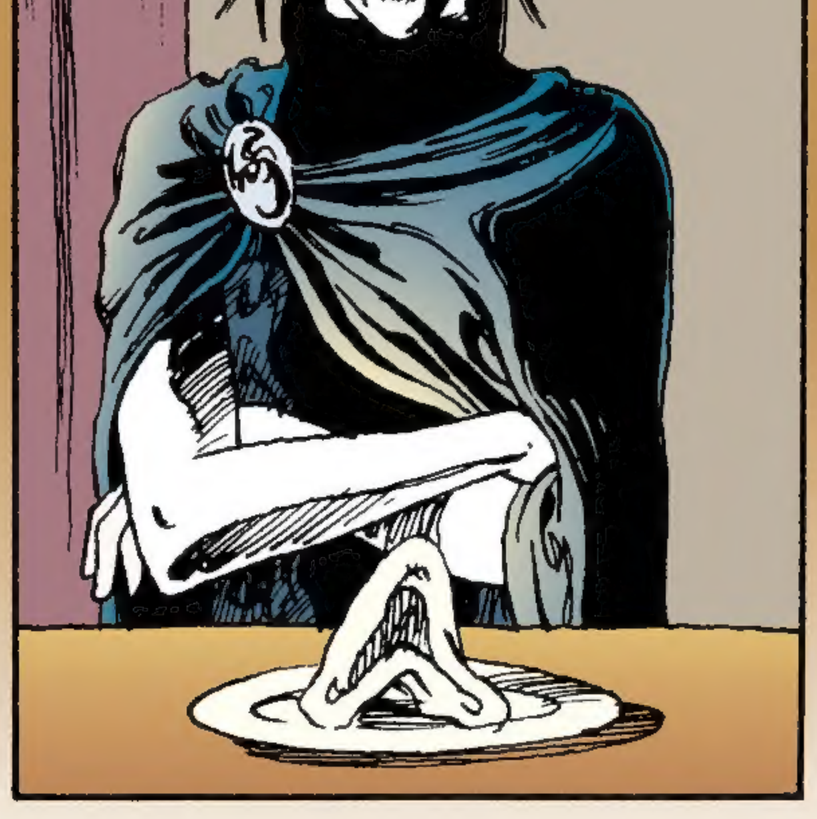
EIGHT: JOURNEY'S END—BRAINS, A HEART, A RIDE IN A BALLOON—DINNER—SOMETHING NEW—THE ILLUSION OF PERMANENCE—A WREATH OF BRIGHT STARS—ECHOES OF DARKNESS—UP. OUT.

WELL, HELP YOURSELVES TO ANYTHING ON THE TABLE. *PLEASE*. IT'S HERE TO BE EATEN.

THE SANDMAN

Written by Neil Gaiman, drawn by Jill Thompson, inked by Vince Locke, lettered by Todd Klein, colored by Danny Vozzo, edited by Karen Berger, assisted by Shelly Roeberg.

featuring characters created by Gaiman, Kieth and Dringenberg



SO.

I EXPECT YOU'RE ALL WONDERING WHY I CALLED YOU HERE THIS EVENING.

You... called us here?

WELL, NO. NOT REALLY. THAT WAS MORE IN THE WAY OF A JOKE, I SUPPOSE. TO SET YOU AT YOUR EASE.

I MEAN, I KNEW YOU WERE COMING. THAT WAS WHY I MADE DINNER...

RETSINA, ANYBODY?

TRY SOME OF THE LITTLE MEATBALLS. I'M RATHER PLEASED WITH THE WAY THEY CAME OUT...

You... created all this?

NOT THE RAW INGREDIENTS. I PURCHASED THEM DOWN AT THE VILLAGE. BUT I TURNED THEM INTO THE MEAL ON THE TABLE.

He grew the herbs himself, though. In the garden.

He planted the seeds and everything came up. Except the basil.

AND THE CHIVES.

And the chives.

BUT THAT WAS BECAUSE SOMEBODY DECIDED THAT THE CHIVE PATCH WAS AN IDEAL LOCATION FOR BONE-BURYING.

And somebody said he wouldn't keep going on about a perfectly understandable mistake that anyone could have made.

My brother. We are together here on family business.

I confess I do not feel it to be entirely appropriate for your associate to be present.

NO?

AND DO YOU ALSO FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT BARNABAS, MY SISTER?

BARNABAS?

Me.

I MET YOU ON THE HILL, DIDN'T I, DOGGIE? WHEN I WAS COMING HERE? WASN'T THAT YOU? AND NOT ANOTHER DOGGIE?

Ah, yes. You must have grown on a particularly penetrating and incisive branch of the family tree.

OH! I LIKE YOU! YOU MUSTN'T MAKE THE DOGGIE GO AWAY, DREAM.

Very well: if it is silent, then it may stay.

Although it may repeat nothing it hears in this place, neither to man nor animal nor any other kind of creature.

SKRITCH

NEVER MIND, BARNABAS. IT'LL DO YOU GOOD TO SIT AND LISTEN, FOR A WHILE.

HAVE SOME SALAD, AT LEAST, DREAM.

I did not come here seeking food, my brother.

NO. YOU CAME HERE SEEKING ME.

IT WAS ME THAT THOUGHT OF IT. I THOUGHT OF IT IN MY HEAD. I THOUGHT, I MISSED YOU, AND I THOUGHT, IF WE WENT TO FIND YOU, THEN WE'D FIND YOU, AND THAT WOULD MAKE EVERYTHING ALWAYS BETTER FOR EVER...

SO I WENT AND LOOKED FOR YOU AND FIRST OF ALL DESIRE WAS AT THIS PARTY AND SHE SAID SHE WOULDN'T HELP AND THEN DESPAIR SHOWED ME HER RATS AND SHE HAD A SAD MAN IN A MIRROR BUT SHE WOULDN'T COME WITH ME AND I WENT TO SEE DREAM BUT FIRST I WENT HOME AND CRIED A LITTLE BIT.

SO I WENT TO SEE DREAM AND I THOUGHT HE'D SAY NO BUT HE GAVE ME LITTLE CHOCOLATE LOVERS AND HE SAID OKAY. AND WE SAW THIS TRAVELLING MAN AND I MADE LITTLE FROGS AND THIS LADY WANTED MY NAME, AND I WENT ON A AIRPLANE.

I LIKE AIRPLANES. I LIKE ANYWHERE THAT ISN'T A PROPER PLACE. I LIKE IN-BETWEENS.

THERE WAS A LADY NAMED RUBY ONLY SHE GOT BURNED ALL UP BUT THAT WAS LATER. AND THERE WAS A LAWYER TOO BUT HE GOT ALL BURNED UP TOO. I MEAN HE GOT SQUASHED.

AND THE ETAIN LADY RAN AWAY BECAUSE HER HOUSE WENT BOOM AND THE ALDER MAN WASN'T IN THE WORLD ANY MORE AND I FOUND TIFFANY AND SHE WAS WITH THE DANCING LADY.

AND THEN I DID DRIVING AND I WAS REALLY GOOD.

THEN WE WENT TO THE DANCING LADY AND DREAM TALKED TO HER AND I MADE THIS MAN GIVE TIFFANY ALL HIS DOLLARS, THEN WE WENT AWAY.

THEN DREAM SAID HE WOULDN'T GO WITH ME ANY MORE AND I WENT HOME AND CRIED A LITTLE BIT, BUT THEN HE SAID HE WAS SORRY AND REALLY HE WOULD COME WITH ME AGAIN, BECAUSE...

I DON'T REMEMBER. SOMETHING. AND THAT HE'D BE NICE TO ME.

FRIENDS.

THEN WE WENT TO NOWHERE AND THEN WE WENT TO THE FAIR AND THEN WE WENT TO DESTINY'S GUARDING. AND THEN DREAM WENT ALL SPOGGLY AND I HAD TO PUT ME ALL...

I...

I HAD TO...

I HAD TO BE...

IT HURT.

AND THEN WE WENT OVER THERE AND I ATE SOME CHERRIES AND THE STONES SAID I WAS GOING TO BE A KANGAROO WHEN I GROW UP AND THEN WE CAME HERE.

SO IT WAS ME.

UM.

THAT'S ALL.

As she says: we have been looking for you for some small time now.

PLEASE EAT SOMETHING. I SPENT MOST OF TODAY COOKING FOR YOU BOTH, AFTER ALL.

SO HOW ARE THE FAMILY? IT MUST BE, WHAT, 300 YEARS?

The family? Little has changed since last we were together.

Destiny is unchanged.

Our older sister is well.

Desire is...well, Desire is Desire. I have seen them all recently.

And when last I saw Despair, she stated that she missed you.

POOR DESPAIR. I REMEMBER WHEN FIRST SHE ASSUMED THE MANTLE OF DESPAIR; WHEN FIRST SHE BECAME DESIRE'S TWIN.

I DON'T THINK IT WAS UM. EASY FOR HER.

It was not easy for any of us. It was the only time one of the Endless had been destroyed, that another aspect of one of us had reassumed the position: we all had much to adjust to.

YES.

THAT WAS WHY I EVENTUALLY CHOSE THE COURSE OF ACTION THAT I DID. AFTER ALL, IT WOULDN'T HAVE DONE FOR ANOTHER VERSION OF ME TO HAVE BEEN DUMPED INTO THE SAME MESS ALL OVER AGAIN...

You abandoned your responsibilities.

SO YOU SAID, 300 YEARS AGO.

THEY'RE ALL JUST LIKE THEY WERE. THE FAMILY. NOT CHANGED. BUT IT'S NOT THE SAME. NOT WITHOUT YOU.

I'M SORRY.

IT USED TO BE BETTER. YOU USED TO MAKE EVERYTHING NICE.

I MADE MY DECISION. I CAN LIVE WITH IT.

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE *NEITHER* OF YOU IS INTERESTED IN THE DINNER I MADE. IS THERE ANYTHING *ELSE* YOU WERE AFTER?

BRAINS? A HEART? A RIDE IN A BALLOON?

Mortal food has never held much attraction for me, brother.

I HAD SOME CHERRIES BEFORE I CAME. FROM A TREE. THEY WERE ALL *OVER* IT.

HAVE YOU *REALLY* GOT A BALLOON?

I'M AFRAID *NOT*, LASS. IT WAS BY WAY OF BEING A FIGURE OF SPEECH.

I SUPPOSE WHAT I *MEANT* WAS, *WELL*, YOU CAME LOOKING FOR ME. YOU'VE *FOUND* ME. *NOW* WHAT?

UM. WELL. NOW WE'VE FOUND YOU, YOU'LL COME ALL BACK, *WON'T* YOU?

AND EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT AND THE FAMILY WILL BE BACK AND ALL TOGETHER AND WE'LL ALL TALK AND LIKE EACH OTHER AGAIN.

I SEE. AND *YOU*, DREAM, WHY DID *YOU* COME LOOKING FOR ME?

I came because I wished to. Initially, perhaps, because our sister desired company on the road. I had other reasons.

Later it became a matter of honor. There was a woman named Ruby who died because we looked for you. She knew nothing of our quest.

It was not JUST that she should die...

300 YEARS AGO YOU WOULD HAVE TOLD ME THAT SHE WAS SIMPLY MORTAL, AND WOULD HAVE DIED LATER, HAD SHE NOT DIED THEN.

I doubt I have changed that much.

WHATEVER YOU SAY, MY BROTHER.

HERE YOU GO, BARNABAS.

IF NO ONE *ELSE* IS GOING TO EAT THE MEATBALLS, I'M SURE YOU'LL APPRECIATE THEM.

I SUPPOSE I *HAD* VAGUELY HOPED THAT YOU HAD CHANGED, MY BROTHER. THAT YOU'D NOTICED THAT THERE WERE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.

THAT YOU HAD BEGUN TO SEE PEOPLE AS OTHER THAN THINGS THAT DREAM, AS CREATURES OF STORIES.

I have never needed you to instruct me on my duties, brother: now, I would hazard, less than ever. I still perform my responsibilities, after all.

I DON'T. NOT ANY *MORE*. BUT *YOU* KNOW THAT.

And what of your realm?

I'M SURE IT'S STILL THERE, IN ITS FASHION. PEOPLE AND THINGS ARE STILL CREATED; STILL EXIST; ARE STILL DESTROYED. THEY TEAR DOWN AND THEY BUILD.

THINGS *STILL* CHANGE. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT NO ONE'S *RUNNING* IT ANY-MORE.

IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH *ME* ANY LONGER. IT'S *THEIRS*.

THEY CAN MAKE THEIR *OWN* DESTRUCTION.

IT'S *NOT* MY RESPONSIBILITY.

AND IT'S NOT MY *FAULT*.

HAVE YOU BEEN HERE ALL ALONG?

ON THE *ISLAND*? NO. JUST A FEW YEARS. I'VE BEEN ALL OVER. AS A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL, SO TO SPEAK.

I HELPED BUILD A *CATHEDRAL* IN NEW YORK. I'VE FOUGHT FOR *PAY* IN AFRICA. I'VE WORKED AS A PAVEMENT ARTIST IN LONDON, AND AS A STREET ARTIST IN PARIS.

I SPENT AN ENJOYABLE MONTH FORGING CAVE PAINTINGS FOR A SPANISH TOWN THAT NEEDED TOURISTS, AND A DULL DECADE HELPING DIG THE PANAMA CANAL.

AREN'T *EITHER* OF YOU GOING TO EAT *ANY*THING? I MADE BAKLAVA FOR DESSERT...

AND THERE'S *COFFEE*.

How did you know we were coming?

HM? OH, I SET UP CERTAIN MECHANISMS, WHEN I LEFT MY REALM FOR THE LAST TIME. NOTHING *FANCY*.

THERE'S A SCRYING POOL OUT BACK: IT TELLS ME IF ANYONE'S LOOKING FOR ME, IN MY LATE CAPACITY.

THERE ARE ALSO CERTAIN AUTOMATIC FUNCTIONS THAT I SET IN PLACE JUST BEFORE I *LEFT* TO IMPEDE ANYONE WHO MIGHT ACTUALLY TRY TO COME *AFTER* ME...

These... functions... you mention--might they have caused damage to those from whom we sought help, on our way here?

I AM AFRAID *SO*.

THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD *DO* ABOUT IT. NOTHING I COULD DO TO *STOP* IT HAPPENING, ONCE YOU BEGAN TO LOOK FOR ME.

NOT WITHOUT RESUMING MY FUNCTION ONCE MORE...

But the people who were hurt...? Some of them had been your friends...

ONE OF THEM WAS ONCE MY LOVER.

OH, BUT YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HER END, DID YOU?

HERE YOU GO, LITTLE SISTER. GREEK COFFEE.

DON'T DRINK THE SLUDGE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CUP.

OH. THANK YOU.

AND DON'T DRINK THE CUP, EITHER. *JUST* THE COFFEE.

OKAY.

HERE. YOUR COFFEE.

HOW DID YOU *FIND* ME, IN THE END?

In the end?

I... spoke to my son.

YOUNG *ORPHEUS*? I *LIKED* HIM.

I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT VISITING HIM, WALKING OVER AND JUST SAYING HELLO. BUT...

NO. HE'S *STILL* FAMILY, AFTER ALL.

ANYWAY, I THOUGHT YOU TWO WEREN'T *TALKING*.

We haven't been.

BUT YOU WENT AND *SPOKE* TO HIM BECAUSE OF ME?

Yes.

I'M *FLATTERED*. MAYBE SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE HAS COME OUT OF THIS LITTLE JAUNT OF YOURS AFTER ALL.

THE LAST TIME I SAW HIM, HE *REMINDED* ME OF YOU. A ROMANTIC FOOL. SELF-PITYING. BUT WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PERSONAL CHARM.

THAT WAS SHORTLY AFTER HIS YOUNG LADY HAD MET WITH HER MISFORTUNE, OF COURSE.

You sent him to see our sister.

IT WAS WHAT HE WANTED.

He was a child. He did not know what he wanted. It is something he has since had time to regret.

My brother? How could you leave?

HOW? OR WHY?

It makes no difference.

YEEUCKH.

BECAUSE THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A ONE-SIDED COIN. BECAUSE THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO EVERY SKY.

DESTRUCTION DID NOT CEASE WITH MY ABANDONMENT OF MY REALM, NO MORE THAN PEOPLE WOULD CEASE TO DREAM SHOULD *YOU* ABANDON YOURS.

PERHAPS IT'S MORE UNCONTROLLED, WILDER. PERHAPS NOT. BUT IT'S NO LONGER *ANYONE'S* RESPONSIBILITY.

I TOOK MY SIGIL WITH ME: I DID NOT PASS IT ON.

AS THIS UNIVERSE CAME INTO BEING, DESTINY CAME WITH IT, ALONE IN THE DARKNESS.

BEFORE THE FIRST LIVING THING CAME INTO EXISTENCE, OUR SISTER WAS THERE, WAITING.

And when the first living thing awoke to life, I was also there. You tell me nothing new.

I'M *TRYING*, MY BROTHER. IT WAS *GETTING* YOU TO *LISTEN* TO ANY-THING NEW THAT I ALWAYS HAD PROBLEMS WITH.

LET'S GO OUTSIDE, INTO THE GARDEN. IT'S A WARM NIGHT, AFTER ALL.

I *LIKE* THE STARS. IT'S THE ILLUSION OF PERMANENCE, I THINK. I MEAN, THEY'RE *ALWAYS* FLARING UP AND CAVING IN AND GOING OUT.

BUT FROM *HERE*, I CAN PRETEND...

I CAN PRETEND THAT THINGS *LAST*. I CAN PRETEND THAT LIVES LAST LONGER THAN MOMENTS.

GODS COME, AND GODS GO. MORTALS FLICKER AND FLASH AND FADE.

WORLDS DON'T LAST; AND STARS AND GALAXIES ARE TRANSIENT, FLEETING THINGS THAT TWINKLE LIKE FIREFLIES AND VANISH INTO COLD AND DUST.

BUT I CAN PRETEND.

DO NEITHER OF YOU EVER JUST SIT AND REMEMBER? JUST THINK BACK ON TIMES GONE?

ALL THE LIVING THINGS WHOSE LIVES YOU'VE TOUCHED? ALL THE PLANETS AND SPACES AND PLANES YOU'VE SEEN? ALL THE FORMS YOU'VE TAKEN?

JUST SIT AND THINK?

My brother?

Why did you leave?

HE TOLD YOU ALREADY, DREAM. BECAUSE THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A ONE-SIDED COIN.

DOES THE FUR GO ON BEFORE THE FLESH? OR AFTER?

AFTERWARDS, NORMALLY.

ISN'T IT A WONDERFUL NIGHT?

IT REMINDS ME OF SOMETHING OUR SISTER ONCE SAID TO ME.

And what was that?

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, A LONG WAY FROM HERE. THERE WERE RATHER MORE STARS IN THE SKY. AND WE MET, UNDER THE JEWELLED WATER-FALLS. AND WE WALKED.

AND I TOLD HER HOW SMALL I FELT, HOW I WISHED I... KNEW MORE, I SUPPOSE.

WE WERE LOOKING UP AT THE CONSTELLATIONS-- THE DIAMOND GIRL, THE WREATH OF BRIGHT STARS, THE CRUCIBLE...

IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT, IN SOME SENSE, I WAS EVERYWHERE; NOR THAT I WAS MORE POWERFUL THAN...WELL, PRACTICALLY ANYTHING.

"I STILL FELT TINY. I FELT INSIGNIFICANT.

"AND SHE LOOKED AT ME. YOU KNOW HER LOOK. AND SHE SIGHED.

"THEN SHE TOLD ME EVERYONE CAN KNOW EVERYTHING DESTINY KNOWS. AND MORE THAN THAT."

"SHE SAID WE ALL NOT ONLY *COULD* KNOW EVERYTHING.

"WE *DO*.

"WE JUST *TELL* OURSELVES WE DON'T TO MAKE IT ALL BEARABLE."

It sounds unlikely.

THAT WAS WHAT *I* SAID TO HER. I SAID, IF THEY DO THAT, *WHY* DO THEY KEEP WANDERING AROUND AND *FALLING* DOWN MANHOLES AND *TRIPPING* ON BANANA SKINS?

WHY DOES IT SEEM LIKE *NONE* OF US--ENDLESS OR MORTAL, GHOST OR GOD--KNOWS WHAT WE'RE DOING?

And she said?

I *TOLD* YOU. SHE SAID EVERYONE KNOWS EVERYTHING. WE JUST PRETEND TO OURSELVES WE DON'T.

I NEVER KNEW WHAT TO *MAKE* OF THAT.

SHE IS. UM. RIGHT. *KIND* OF.

NOT KNOWING EVERYTHING IS ALL THAT MAKES IT OKAY, SOMETIMES.

Will you return? Will you reassume your role once more?

OF COURSE NOT.

I THOUGHT YOU WOULD.

I'M SORRY, LASSIE.

But you are of the Endless.

We...

We have responsibilities.

You are the embodiment of Destruction. You are of the Endless.

THE *ENDLESS*? THE ENDLESS ARE MERELY *PATTERNS*. THE ENDLESS ARE *IDEAS*. THE ENDLESS ARE *WAVE FUNCTIONS*. THE ENDLESS ARE *REPEATING MOTIFS*.

THE ENDLESS ARE *ECHOES* OF *DARKNESS*, AND NOTHING MORE. WE HAVE NO *RIGHT* TO PLAY WITH THEIR LIVES, TO ORDER THEIR DREAMS AND THEIR DESIRES.

AND EVEN *OUR* EXISTENCES ARE BRIEF AND BOUNDED. *NONE* OF US WILL LAST LONGER THAN THIS VERSION OF THE UNIVERSE.

EXCEPT OUR *SISTER*.

So we suppose.

I FILLED MY ROLE *MORE* THAN ADEQUATELY FOR OVER TEN BILLION YEARS.

A TWO-SIDED COIN: DESTRUCTION IS NEEDED. NOTHING NEW CAN EXIST WITHOUT DESTROYING THE OLD.

THINGS ARE CREATED. THEY LAST FOR *SOME* LITTLE WHILE, AND THEN THEY ARE GONE. EMPIRES, CITIES, POEMS AND PEOPLE. ATOMS AND WORLDS.

ONE CANNOT BEGIN A NEW DREAM WITHOUT ABANDONING THE LAST, *EH*, BROTHER?

WHOOMPF

OUR SISTER DEFINES LIFE, JUST AS DESPAIR DEFINES HOPE, OR DESIRE DEFINES HATRED, OR AS DESTINY DEFINES FREEDOM.

And what do I define, by this theory of yours.

REALITY, PERHAPS?

THERE ARE RATHER A LOT OF STARS, AREN'T THERE?

I COULD NEVER LEAVE MY REALM. IT'S GOT ALL MY THINGS IN IT.

YOU KNOW, I WAS REALLY RATHER ENJOYING MY TIME HERE, BEFORE YOU TWO BEGAN LOOKING FOR ME.

LIFE WAS COMFORTABLE AND UNCHANGING. AND YOU'VE RATHER UNDONE THAT.

I SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT COMING.

BUT AT LEAST WE'VE HAD THIS TIME TOGETHER.

MY SISTER. I HAVE ENJOYED SEEING YOU. YOU WERE ALWAYS MY FAVORITE.

I TRUST THAT WHEN YOUR NEXT CHANGE COMES, IT PROVES EASY ON YOU.

CHANGE?

MY BROTHER. THERE IS NO ONE LIKE YOU. YOU ALSO HAVE CHANGED MORE THAN EVEN YOU KNOW, I WOULD SUSPECT.

ONCE YOU ARE DONE HERE, THEN WHERE WILL YOU GO?

There were matters left unfinished with my son.

DREAM, YOU LEFT MATTERS UNFINISHED WITH YOUR SON SOME THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO.

COME ON *IN*. THIS IS MY OLD GALLERY. I'VE BEEN DRAGGING IT AROUND WITH ME SINCE I LEFT MY REALM.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW *WHY* I'VE HELD ONTO IT *THIS* LONG.

HABIT, I IMAGINE. OR SENTIMENT.

MY BROTHER. THERE IS NOTHING I CAN *GIVE* YOU, SAVE *THIS*: MY ADVICE. *REMEMBER* WHAT I DID. REMEMBER THAT I *LEFT*.

REMEMBER HOW *HARD* IT WAS FOR ME TO LEAVE; AND THAT IT WAS *NOT* YOUR FAULT.

That is your advice?

INDEED IT IS. *REMEMBER*.

I am not in the habit of forgetting things.

DREAM, MY BROTHER. YOU FORGET *NOTHING* YOU HAVE INTEREST IN; YOU FORGET, *INSTANTLY*, THOSE THINGS YOU DO *NOT* CARE TO KNOW.

DO YOU STILL BLAME YOURSELF?

BECAUSE I LEFT.

For what?

I never blamed myself.

NO?

What will you do now?

I WILL MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT I'VE GOT. I SHALL LIVE OUT MY DAYS DOING WHAT I HAVE TO DO, ONE DAY AT A TIME.

LIFE, LIKE TIME, IS A JOURNEY THROUGH DARKNESS.

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW *LONG* MY SPAN SHALL BE. I NEED TO KEEP THE SWORD, OF COURSE, AND THE POOL. BUT I'LL LEAVE EVERYTHING ELSE BEHIND ME. IT WILL CEASE TO EXIST SOON ENOUGH.

AND *YOU*, SISTER. WHAT SHOULD I GIVE *YOU*?

I DON'T KNOW.

I DIDN'T *LIKE* THE COFFEE. AND I CAN'T *SAY* TARAMASALATA OR BAKLAVA OR THOSE THINGS.

MAYBE *YOU* COULD COME AND STAY IN *MY* REALM. YOU CAN LIVE *THERE* WITH *ME*, AND YOU CAN MAKE ME *LAUGH* AND I'LL DO YOU LITTLE *DANCES*, AND... AND...

YOU WON'T, WILL YOU?

NO.

BUT YOU'VE GIVEN ME AN IDEA.

BARNABAS, MY FRIEND. ANSWER IF YOU WISH.

WILL YOU GO *WITH* THE LADY DELIRIUM, WALK BESIDE HER, TREAD THE PATH THAT SHE TREADS ALSO? PROTECT AND *LEAD* AND *GUIDE* HER?

I CAN'T LOOK AFTER A DOGGIE.

You misheard him. I get to look after *you*.

OH.

DEL. BARNABAS *CAN* BE A BIT OF A PAIN, AND HE HAS *NO* POETRY IN HIS SOUL, BUT HE *MEANS* WELL.

I resent that remark.

OF *COURSE* YOU DO.

WELL?

Can't I go *with* you?

YOU COULD NOT SURVIVE IN THE PLACES I AM TRAVELLING TO.

Oh. I see.

Well, she shouldn't be allowed *out* off a leash. But I'll do what I *can*.

HAVE EITHER OF YOU GOT A HANDKERCHIEF? OR A PIECE OF CLOTH?

Here.

THANKS. BLACK, EH? TCH...

HM. STRIPES? OR SPOTS? SPOTS ARE MORE APPROPRIATE.

Desire told me not to come looking for you.

DESIRE WAS RIGHT. ALSO UNTRUSTWORTHY, ACERBIC, DANGEROUS AND CRUEL. BUT RIGHT.

YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF LEAVING WELL ENOUGH ALONE.

STILL, WHAT'S DONE CAN'T BE UNDONE. OR VERY RARELY. AND DEFINITELY NOT THIS TIME.

You could pass it on.

WHAT? AND DROP SOMEONE ELSE INTO THE SAME OLD MESS?

I'M NO LONGER YOUNG, DREAM. AND I MADE MY DECISION.

IF YOU SEE ISHTAR AGAIN, GIVE HER MY LOVE.

Must I?

YES.

BE GOOD. LOOK AFTER HER.

I'll *miss* you.

AH YES. YOU'LL MISS THE *POETRY* READINGS. THE *PAINTINGS*. THE LATE NIGHT FLAMENCO *GUITAR* RECITALS.

That's *right*. Go on. Try to make me *feel* better.

You are going now?

YES.

Where?

OH, OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE. UP. OUT.

SO HE'S REALLY GONE.

He left 300 years ago.

I THOUGHT HE'D COME BACK TO US.

I know.

Hey-- cheer up. That's what I say. Just cheer up. You know?

I mean, life's too short.

So now what?

I DON'T KNOW. DREAM? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

I need to return to the temple.

WHY?

I have to kill my son.

To Be Concluded

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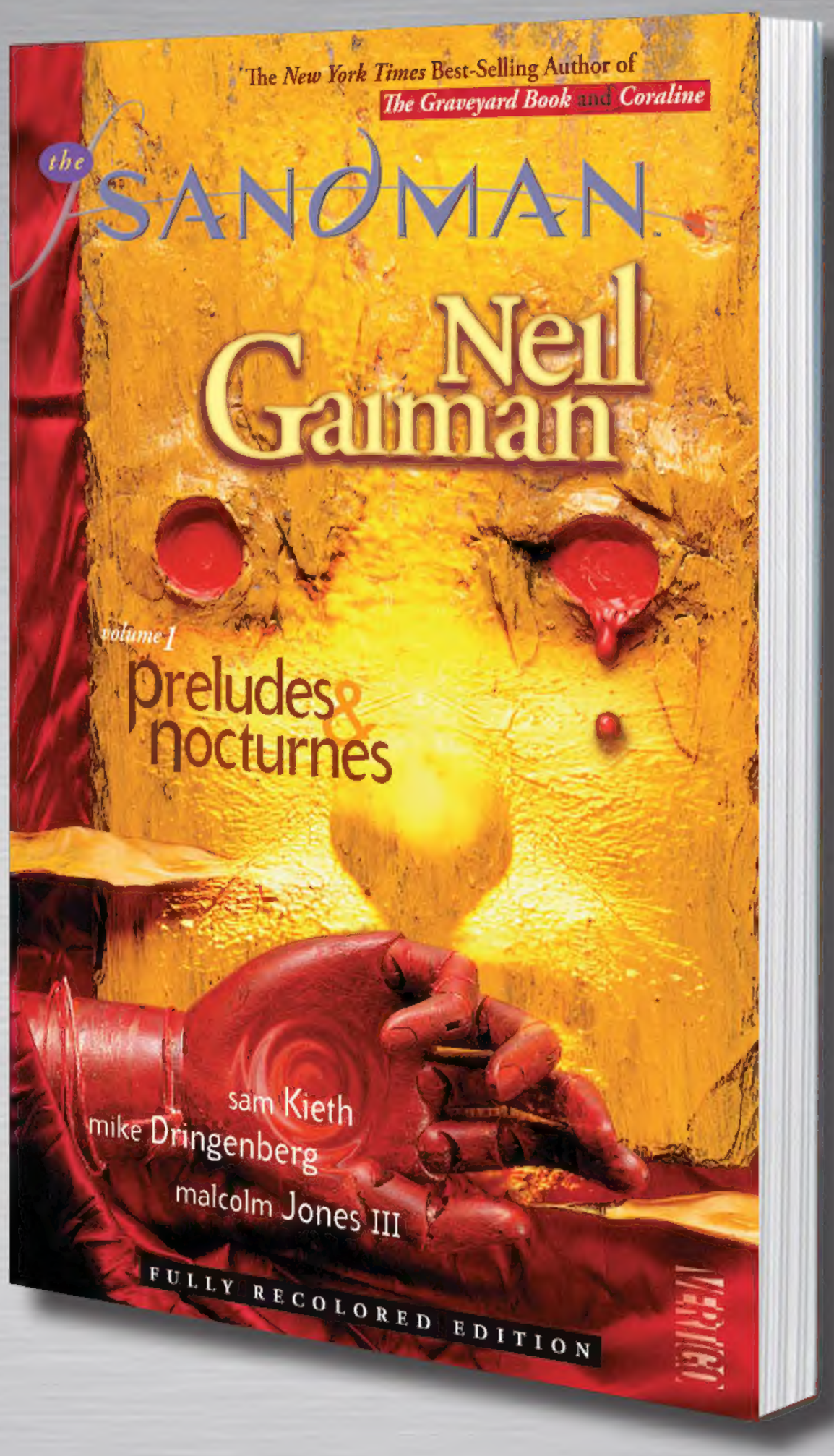

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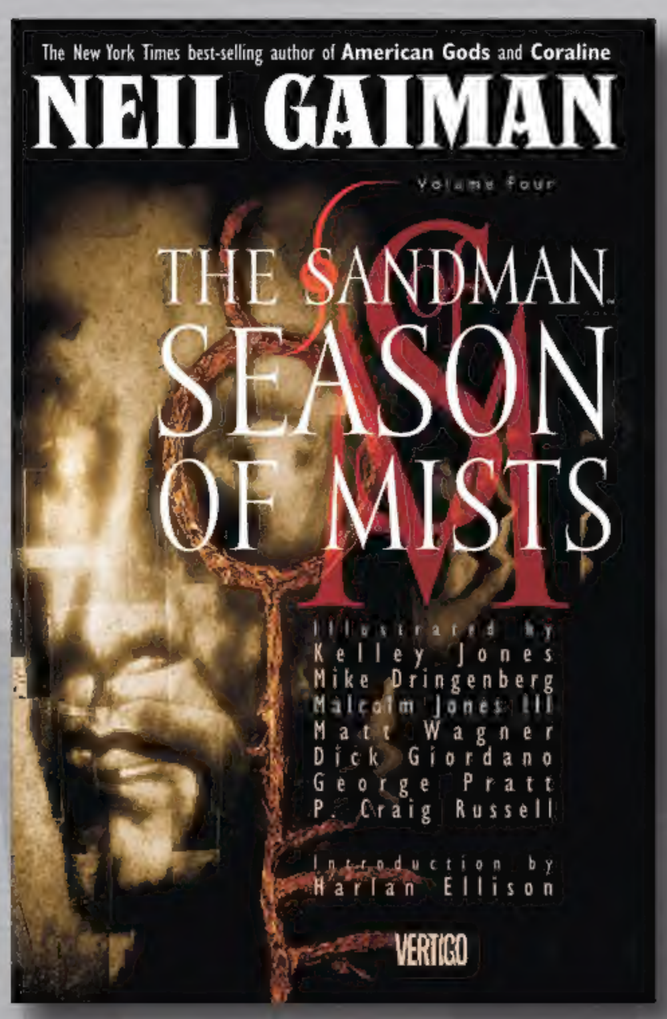

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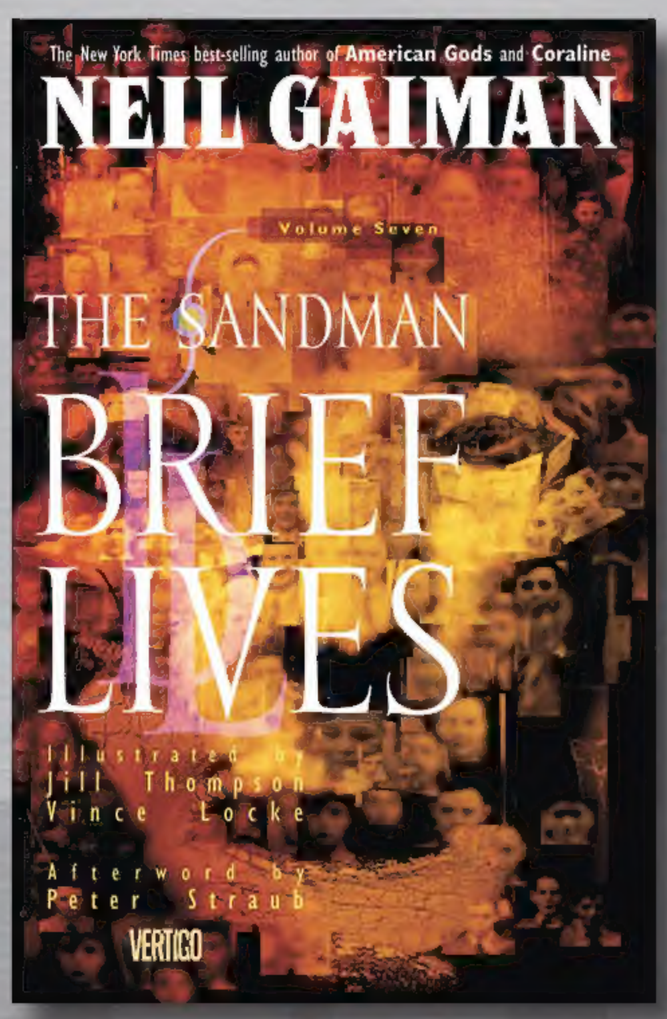

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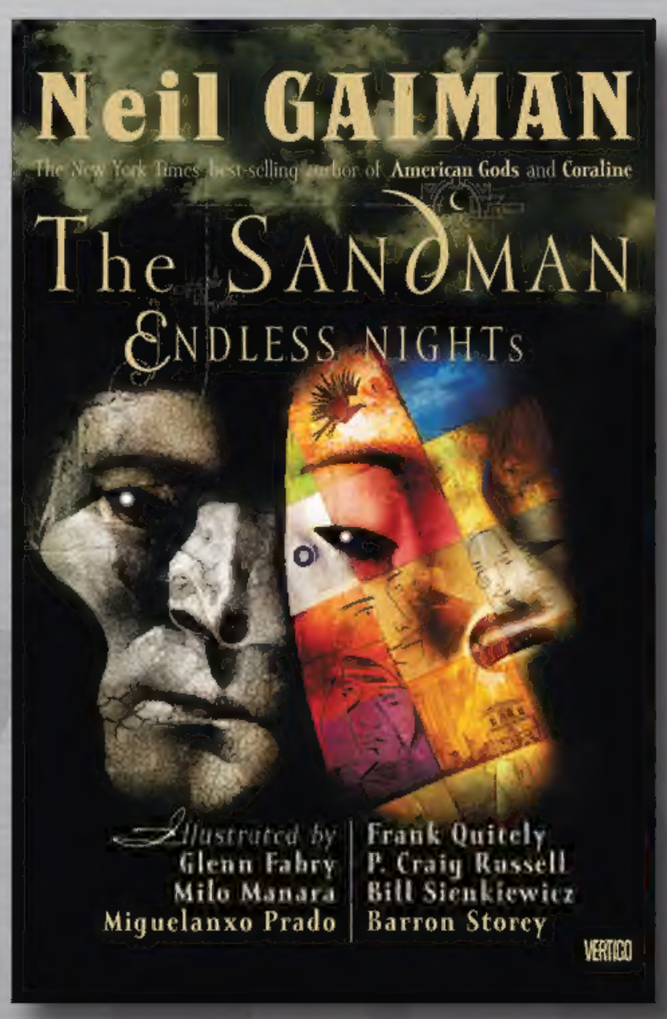
ENDLESS NIGHTS



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